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ABSTRACT

This paper presents nine sets of books which focus on specific contemporary international issues, and which have been used successfully with upper elementary grade students. The paper shows how the books (including picture books), which include subjects such as the preservation of the environment, world peace, endangered animals, and the coming of age in different cultures, can serve as a springboard for indepth discussions of other cultures and a vehicle for extension activities such as music, art, drama, writing, and cooking. The paper arranges the books in text sets according to theme: (1) people the world over; (2) creation stories--world views; (3) promotion of peace among nations; (4) the conflict between greed and giving; (5) overcoming fear; (6) preservation of natural resources; (7) compassion in the face of adversity; (8) the Cinderella story from many cultures; and (9) endangered animals. First, the focus of each theme is described, then suggested readings are offered, and finally additional activities are listed. (PRA)

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A KALEIDOSCOPE: CHILDREN VIEWING

THE WORLD THROUGH BOOKS OF THE LATE '80's.

A session presented at the
Thirty-Six Annual Convention of the
International Reading Association
May 1991
By

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The international books presented in this session focus on specific contemporary issues which include the preservation of the environment, world peace, endangered animals, the coming of age in different cultures, etc. These books have been used successfully by the speakers with upper elementary grade students. The books served as a springboard for indepth discussions of other cultures and a vehicle for extension activities such as music, art, drama, writing, and cooking.

The books are arranged in text sets according to theme. Just as students vary in reading levels, so do the books cited here. Picture books as well as chapter books are included.

FOCUS: People the World Over

In this text set students are presented with the similarities and differences among people around the world. Abiyoyo uses characters of multiple ethnic backgrounds in its illustrations. People offers the reader a wide variety of human characteristics that make all people alike, i.e. a page with just noses. The other books also provide children with an understanding of different cultures and ethnic groups.

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Abiyoyo by Peter Seeger, il. by Michael Hayes, Macmillan (1986).

People by Peter Spier, Doubleday (1980).

The Doubleday Children's Atlas ed. by Jane Oliver, Doubleday (1987).

The Book of Holidays Around the World by Alice van Straalen, Penguin (1986).

Oh, the Places You'll Go! by Dr. Seuss, Random House (1990).

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES:

1. Sing the song "Abiyoyo" accompanied by rhythm instruments.
2. List the similarities and differences among the people of the world.
3. Choose a country and research pertinent information about it.
4. Have an international food festival or parade with flags.

FOCUS: In the Beginning - World Views

American elementary students study the changing earth and the evolutionary process. Often this study conflicts with the knowledge they have learned at home. This group of books examines different theories of creation from those of primitive people to the viewpoint presented in the Bible. They serve as a catalyst for discussion and a means to better define personal beliefs.

SUGGESTED READINGS:

The Secret of Dreaming by Jim Poulter, il. by Mark Smith, Red Hen Enterprises (1988).

In the Night, Still Dark by Richard Lewis, il. by Ed young, Athenaeum (1988).

In the Beginning - Creation Stories from Around the World, told by Virginia Hamilton, il. by Barry Moser, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich (1988).

The Doubleday Illustrated Children's Bible by Sandol Stoddard, paintings by Tony Chen, Doubleday (1987).

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES:

1. Compare and contrast the various theories of creation.
2. Make a mobile showing the elements of one theory.

FOCUS: Promotion of Peace Among Nations

This text set focuses on the effects of war, specifically the aftermath of the nuclear bombings of Nagasaki and Hiroshima, Japan. The students are able to identify with Sadako as she dies from leukemia and lament the killing of the elephants in the Tokyo Zoo. War is personalized in these books, and the necessity of finding peaceful solutions to world problems becomes very real. The Butter Battle Book depicts how some conflicts originate from trivial matters. Because the Miracle Tree has a Christmas story embedded in it, this book along with The Tree of Cranes by Allen Say can be used during the Christmas season.

SUGGESTED READINGS:

The Miracle Tree by Christobel Mattingley, il. by Marianne Yamaguchi, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich (1985).

Hiroshima No Pika by Toshi Maruki, Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Books (1980).

Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes by Eleanor Coerr, il. by Ronald Himler, Dell (1977)

Faithful Elephants by Yukio Tsuchiya, il. by Ted Lewin, Houghton Mifflin Co. (1988).

The Butter Battle Book by Dr. Seuss, Random House (1984).

The Big Book for Peace edited by Ann Durell and Marilyn Sachs, Dutton Children's Books (1990).

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES:

1. Have small group discussions about alternatives to nuclear war.
2. Decorate a Christmas tree with origami paper cranes.
3. Create banners and slogans about peace in the world.

FOCUS: Universal Conflict between Greed and Giving

Children, as they grow up, experience the conflict between wanting for themselves and giving of themselves. In order for them to move from an egocentric focus, they must begin to realize the consequences of greed and the benefits of giving. These books present the dilemma in varied situations and settings. The books, Dawn and The Crane Wife, are similar stories from different countries and provide the student an opportunity to compare and contrast the two cultures.

SUGGESTED READINGS:

The Changing Maze by Zilpha Keatley Snyder, il. by Charles Mikolaycak, Macmillan (1985).

The Weaving of a Dream - a Chinese Folktale retold and il. by Marilee Heyer, Viking Kestrel (1986).

Hey, Al by Arthur Yorinks, il. by Richard Egielski, Farrar, Straus and Girous (1986).

Dawn by Molly Bang, William Morrow & Co. (1983).

The Crane Wife retold by Sumiko Yagawa, translated by Katherine Paterson, il. by Suekichi Akaba, William Morrow & Co. (1981)

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES:

1. Make a semantic mapping of the relationships among the story's characters.
2. In a small group do a "Sketch to Stretch" of the story's main idea.
3. Develop maze designs or make a small weaving (perhaps friendship bracelets).

FOCUS: Overcoming Fear

The fear of storms and darkness is experienced by most children. Attempting a new task for the first time is also overwhelming. The following books provide insight into specific fears and illustrate how youngsters from many cultures have been successful in overcoming them.

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Very Last First Time by Jan Andrews, il. by Ian Wallace, Athenaeum (1986).

Knots on a Counting Rope by Bill Martin and John Archambault, Holt (1987).

Thunder Cake by Patricia Polacco, Philomel Books (1990).

Storm in the Night by Mary Stolz, il. by Pat Cummings, Harper (1988).

Darkness and the Butterfly by Ann Grifalconi, Little, Brown (1987).

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES:

1. Write a letter to an imaginary friend discussing something that frightened you.
2. Dramatize the part of the stories where the character overcomes fear.
3. Bake a "thunder cake" as a class activity.

FOCUS: Presentation of Natural Resources

All of the world's people need to be involved in the preservation of our natural resources. The effects of each country's actions is experienced by the others. We are no longer isolated countries but part of a global village. The underlying theme of the following books is - think globally, act locally.

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Where the Forest Meets the Sea by Jeannie Baker, Julia MacRae Books (1987).

Vanishing Habitats by Noel Simon, Gloucester Press (1987).

The Wartville Wizard by Don Madden, Macmillan (1986).

Just a Dream by Chris Van Allsburg, Houghton Mifflin (1990).

50 Simple Things Kids Can Do to Save the Earth by the Earth Works Group, il. by Michele Montez, Andrews and McNeel Books, Kansas City (1990).

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES:

1. Foster an earth-positive lunchtime trend by using a lunchbox or reusing lunch bags.
2. Plant a tree to save the Earth.
3. Organize a letter writing campaign to legislators and businesses to encourage them to save the rainforests.
4. Mark off a square area equivalent to one acre to help students visualize how much rainforest is being cleared (19 acres per minute) in Central and South America.

FOCUS: Compassion in the Face of Adversity

Persecution has reared its ugly head in a number of cultures throughout history. Despite conditions, individuals have displayed courage and compassion for their fellow man. This text set emphasizes human compassion in the most trying of circumstances.

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Follow the Drinking Gourd by Jeanette Winter, Knopf (1988).

Nettie's Trip South by Ann Turner, il. by Ronald Himler, Macmillan, 1987.

Number the Stars by Lois Lowry, Houghton Mifflin (1989).

The Devil's Arithmetic by Jane Yolen, Viking (1988).

The Children We Remember by Chana Byers Abells, photographs from the archives of Yad Yashem, Greenwillow (1986).

Rose Blanche by Roberto Innocenti, Stewart, Tabori & Chang (1990).

Let the Celebrations Begin! by Margaret Wild, il. by Julie Vivas, Orchard (1991).

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES:

1. On a world map, locate the places where the stories occur to emphasize that this is a universal problem.
2. Pretend you must quickly leave your home. List the things that you would pack in your suitcase.
3. During a class discussion make a semantic map of the personal traits that allowed the characters to overcome their persecutors.

FOCUS: Cinderella - A Global Oneness

The Cinderella story appears in over 500 forms across cultures throughout history. Daily hardships and obstacles are overcome by perseverance, love, and kindness. This overriding theme permeates these Cinderella stories regardless of the magical forces, characters, and settings.

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Cinderella retold from the Brothers Grimm and il. by Nonny Hogrogian, Greenwillow (1981).

Cinderella by Charles Perrault, retold by Amy Ehrlich, il. by Susan Jeffers, Dial Books for Young Readers (1985).

Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters - An African Tale by John Steptoe, Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Books (1987).

The Brocaded Slipper and Other Vietnamese Tales by Lynette Dyer Vuong, il. by Vo-Dinh Mai, Addison-Wesley (1982).

Yeh-Shen - A Cinderella Story from China retold by Ai-Ling Louie, il. by Ed Young, Philomel Books (1982).

Moss Gown by William H. Hooks, il. by Donald Carrick, Clarion Books (1987).

The Egyptian Cinderella by Shirley Climo, il. by Ruth Heller, Harper & Row (1989).

Prince Cinders by Babette Cole, G. P. Putnam's Sons (1987).

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES:

1. Compare and contrast the different settings, magical elements, character development, story tone, and illustrations.
2. Write your own version of Cinderella using contemporary ideas.
3. Make fish kites as a follow-up to Yeh-Shen or the Brocaded Slipper.

FOCUS: Animal Friends the World Over

The plight of endangered animals has come to the forefront of people's awareness throughout the world. Children in the elementary grades have a natural attraction to animals. These books allow the students to view how animals affect man and how man affects animals. They show the interconnectedness among all elements of nature. The stories serve as a vehicle to persuade children to become actively involved in the preservation of life on earth.

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Daisy Rothschild, The Giraffe Who Lives With Me by Betty Leslie-Melville, Doubleday (1988).

Walter Warthog by Betty Leslie-Melville, Doubleday (1989).

The Chimpanzee Family Book by Jane Goodall, photographs by Michael Neugebauer, Picture Book Studio (1989).

Koko's Story by Francine Patterson, photographs by Ronald H. Cohn, Scholastic (1987).

Humphey, the Lost Whale - A True Story by Wendy Tokuda and Richard Hall, il. by Hanako Wakiyama, Heian International, Inc. (1986).

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES:

1. Using non-fiction books, such as Giraffes by Louise C. Brown, research information about the animals and write a group report.
2. Make pop-up books of endangered animals.
3. Raise money by recycling aluminum cans and newspapers to contribute to an organization dedicated to the protection of endangered animals.